

A Study In Humility

There is an engine that's a driving force of sin. It's what we all face because of our fallen nature. I'm talking making a name for ourselves instead of letting God give us a name. I'm talking about pride. One of the more telling biblical examples of pride working to rebel against God is found in Genesis, Chapter Eleven:

Genesis 11:1-9 (NLT)

“At one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. {2} As the people migrated to the east, they found a plain in the land of Babylonia and settled there. {3} They began saying to each other, “Let’s make bricks and harden them with fire.” (In this region bricks were used instead of stone, and tar was used for mortar.) {4} Then they said, “Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.” {5} But the LORD came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. {6} “Look!” he said. “The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! {7} Come, let’s go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won’t be able to understand each other.” {8} In that way, the LORD scattered them all over the world, and they stopped building the city. {9} That is why the city was called Babel, because that is where the LORD confused the people with different languages. In this way he scattered them all over the world.”

Pride is inevitably a destructive, negative quality. It carries in it a feeling of invulnerability, which makes whoever has it a candidate for the inevitability of a fall.

There is a story told of a turtle who wanted to get to the other side of the lake, but it was such a big, deep lake that he knew he could not swim across. He said to himself, “I will find a pair of stupid geese and talk them into flying me to the other side.” He found two geese and told them how majestic they looked when flying. He then asked if they would take him to the other side of the lake. The turtle said, “All you have to do is hold a stick between your beaks and

fly to the opposite side. I will hold onto the stick with my jaws and you need only to fly to the other side.” The geese agreed. The turtle thought to himself, “This was so easy. They are a couple of fools.”

The birds began to fly, going very high into the sky with the turtle hanging onto the stick with his jaws. He was so arrogant, literally puffed up with himself. As they neared the middle of the lake, there were ducks swimming below. One of them shouted to the geese and the turtle, “What an amazing sight. Who could have been so smart as to think of such a thing?” The turtle could not help himself. He opened his mouth and said, “It was me who talked these two fool birds into doing this.” As he began to shout these words to the ducks below, he found himself no longer gripping the stick within his jaws, but hurtling toward the distant waters below. It was anything but a good landing. His pride had taken him on a journey to a very unfortunate and unpleasant landing with very deep consequences.

Proverbs 16:18 and 29:23 (NLT)

“Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.”

Proverbs 29:23 (NLT)

“Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.”

Just as pride is the engine or driving force of sin, humility is the engine of blessings and honor.

- We could define humility in this way: *“Humility is power under control for the good of other people.”*
- We could define pride as *“nothing more than misdirected, arrogance or self-esteem that’s in danger of crossing the red line separating us from blessings and taking us into disaster.”*

OUR FIRST POINT: THE CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC OF PRIDE IS MISDIRECTED ARROGANCE AND THE CONSEQUENCES IT INEVITABLY BRINGS.

Humility is not misdirected arrogance or low self-esteem. It’s not excessive self-deprecation. At its purest, most basic level, it’s

thinking like Jesus. Don't we all want to think like Jesus?

Philippians 2:3-11 (NLT)

“Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. {4} Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. {5} You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. {6} Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. {7} Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, {8} he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross. {9} Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.”

Pride comes when your attitudes fail to agree with God's Word; and within their disagreement and rebellion, generate works of the flesh. In fact, pride is a work of the flesh! Paul called it “selfish ambitions” (Galatians 5:20). A prime example of this, just as with the turtle and the geese, is when we demand recognition and notice... at the expense of others. With pride comes that inevitable fall that we have not considered. (We were too full of ourselves to see it coming.)

- Pride lacks control and discipline.
- It serves our own self-interests, not the interest of others.
- It's an invitation to fall.
- Pride shuts the door to God's favor.
- The Holy Spirit will never lead you into prideful attitudes. If you listen, He will make you aware of it so you can avoid it.
- As you can see, pride will normally place a burden on someone who becomes the brunt or target of our self-serving, self-aggrandizing or contempt-filled actions.
- Pride is a tempter, straight from the devil. It distracts us from seeing what lies ahead. It will blind you to what's coming.

- Humility is having the same attitude Jesus had. He both told us about it and He demonstrated it.

John 13:1-4, 12-15 (NLT)

“Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. {2} It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus {3} Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. {4} So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, {5} and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel he had around him... {12} After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, “Do you understand what I was doing? {13} You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. {14} And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. {15} I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.”

An Indelible Mark

Many years ago, I had the humbling honor of having a great servant of God do just as Jesus taught His disciples. It was completely unexpected and life changing for me. My pastor was unavailable to lead a discipleship class I was attending. He asked me to introduce a guest speaker, who would be teaching in his place that evening. All I was to do was open in prayer, introduce the speaker and when he was finished, close the meeting. I didn’t know who the speaker would be. When the class began, I was surprised and humbled when one of the greatest pure servants of God I’ve had the honor of knowing walked in the back of the room. His name is Pastor Bob Dailey. He was carrying a bowl of water and a towel.

I thought to myself, “This could be interesting. I wonder

what he's going to do... and with whom? To my sudden terror, he told me to put a chair in front of the class, sit in it and take off my shoes and socks. I'm sure you know what he did next! When he was finished washing my feet, he dried them with the towel, picked up his bowl and walked out of the room. He never said a word, except for me to sit down and take off my shoes and socks. So, there I said, stunned and in silence. What could I possibly say? To this day, so many years later, the image of him kneeling to wash my feet has left an indelible mark upon me. (And Jesus said, "Do as I have done unto you.")

OUR SECOND POINT: PRIDEFUL ACTIONS NEVER EDIFY OR ENCOURAGE ANYONE. INEVITABLY, THEY WILL PUT YOU IN YOUR PLACE (A PLACE YOU WILL NOT WANT TO BE IN).

Philippians 2:3-5 (NKJV)

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. {4} Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. {5a} Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus..."

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Thinking as Jesus thinks is the Christian's foundation, and the key to success. To reject such thinking is sin! It's pure arrogance! Arrogance is the world's way, a flawed, weak and vulnerable foundation, that's sure to fail.

James 4:4-6, 10 (NKJV)

"Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. {5} Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? {6} But He gives more grace. Therefore He says:

***"God resists the proud,
But gives grace to the humble."***

...{10} Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up."

Chairs

Dr. David Jeremiah, Senior Pastor of Shadow Mountain Church, tells a story of earlier in his ministry in those times before he had a large church. He and some of his staff were setting up chairs. He had just hired a new associate pastor and as they began to set up the chairs the new guy stood watching. Dr. Jeremiah said, "Come help us." The new associate said, "I don't do chairs." Pastor Jeremiah asked everyone to stop for a minute. He walked over to the new guy and said, "Come with me." Dr. Jeremiah marched him to the parking lot and told him not to come back.

When I started out serving in ministry, long before I was a pastor, I set up hundreds of chairs for our meetings. Later, as the Senior Pastor of a great church and principle of a Bible school in Fiji, I still set up chairs. I never considered myself above doing so. I have looked at myself as a servant, never above those I have been called to lead.

OUR THIRD POINT: THE LORD HAS REQUIREMENTS FOR US. HIS REQUIREMENTS ARE NOT SUGGESTIONS. THEY ARE BIBLICAL, NORMATIVE FOR ALL ETERNITY.

Mica 6:8 (NKJV)

***"He has shown you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justly,
To love mercy,
And to walk humbly with your God?"***

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV)

"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. {17} And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

In the final part of this lesson, we'll look at two of the traps in which the religious officials tried to catch Jesus. It's found in Matthew, Chapter 22 tells us that first, the Sadducees tried to snare Jesus with a hypothetical story about a woman who married seven brothers, one dying after the other. Their question was - to whom would she be married in heaven Jesus responded by putting them in their place. Here's their question and the Lord's answer:

Matthew 22:28-37

“So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her.” {29} Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures, and you don’t know the power of God. {30} For when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage. In this respect they will be like the angels in heaven. {31} But now, as to whether there will be a resurrection of the dead - haven’t you ever read about this in the Scriptures? Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, God said, {32} ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ So he is the God of the living, not the dead.” {33} When the crowds heard him, they were astounded at his teaching.

The Bible then tells us that when the Sadducees heard of Jesus's answer to the Pharisees, they also tried to trap Him. This time, a lawyer from among them attempted to test Jesus with a different question. (The devil is never satisfied.) Let Jesus's answer sink in. Yes, you've heard it a thousand times. As you read the Scriptures below, let it be like looking in the mirror. Here's the lawyer's question and the Lord's answer:

Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” {37} Jesus replied, “You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind [never allowing pride to hold anything back]¹...

¹ My comment, not original Scripture.

{38} This is the first and greatest commandment. {39} A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' {40} The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

It's time we become astonished by His grace and "astounded" with what we've very often taken for granted. Christ is the Lord of the living. Let Him be more than just your Savior. Let Him be your Lord, in 100% of the ways you live and in 100% of the time. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up.

*God bless you as you faithfully serve Christ,
"with all your heart, all your soul, and all your
mind," in everything and with everything.*

Dr. Bob